

Mapping Briefing

The **Approved Provider Standard** and **PQASSO**

Introduction to **PQASSO**

PQASSO is a 'self assessment practical quality assurance system for small organisations, or for projects within larger organisations'. It has been specifically designed for use within voluntary sector organisations and provides a tool by which organisations can benchmark their practice. The assessment covers all areas of an organisation's operation.

PQASSO is managed by the Charities Evaluation Service (CES).

How well does **PQASSO** relate to requirements for the **Approved Provider Standard**?

PQASSO has a good fit with the **Approved Provider Standard (APS)**. Both standards require organisations to assess against all areas of service delivery including structural aspects. However, the **APS** is focused specifically on the delivery of the mentoring/befriending element of service provision and certain aspects of the bigger picture of how an organisation functions does not require the kind of detail that the assessment for **PQASSO** necessitates. Essentially, all evidence collated for the **APS** is relevant to **PQASSO**. Organisations wanting to achieve **PQASSO** in addition to the **APS** will require further evidence regarding aspects such as governance and networking.

The **Approved Provider Standard**

The **APS** framework focuses on five key areas that form the basis of the assessment:

- ✓ Project aims and structure
- ✓ Client group
- ✓ Recruitment and selection of volunteers
- ✓ Volunteer preparation and training
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation

In assessing these, the standard requires organisations to answer 14 questions using MBF guidance to highlight their practice.

PQASSO

PQASSO highlights 12 quality areas that organisations are required to assess themselves against and provides examples of evidence for each:

- ✓ QA1 Planning for Quality
- ✓ QA2 Governance
- ✓ QA3 Management
- ✓ QA4 User-centred Service

- ✓ QA5 Staff and Volunteers
- ✓ QA6 Training and Development
- ✓ QA7 Managing Money
- ✓ QA8 Managing Resources
- ✓ QA9 Managing Activities
- ✓ QA10 Networking and Partnership
- ✓ QA11 Monitoring and Evaluation
- ✓ QA12 Results

For each area, organisations can rate their level of achievement in terms of how well they think they meet the requirements – the levels of achievement are set at 1, 2 & 3.

What are the key similarities between the two Standards?

- ✓ MBF do not charge for the **APS**.
- ✓ The charge for **PQASSO** stems from the requirement for organisations to purchase the workbook and accompanying CD Rom. At time of writing the workbook is £80.50 and accompanying CD Rom is £49.50.
- ✓ The **APS** requires organisations to self assess their practice.
- ✓ **PQASSO** is a self assessment quality assurance process. However, CES who currently manage **PQASSO** are in the process of considering implementation of both accreditation and peer review.
- ✓ The **APS** is essentially a desk top exercise that is undertaken by organisations in house who then complete and submit an application and portfolio of evidence.
- ✓ **PQASSO** is currently an in house exercise that allows an organisation to benchmark its practice.
- ✓ The **APS** recommends that organisations have been involved in delivering mentoring or befriending for a minimum of 12 months prior to completing their application.
- ✓ **PQASSO** has no time stipulation but due to the structures that an organisation will be assessing it is unlikely that organisations implementing **PQASSO** will have been operational for much less than 12 months.
- ✓ The **APS** requires organisations to provide detailed information about how they manage volunteers.
- ✓ One section of **PQASSO** requires the collation of evidence in relation to the involvement of volunteers.
- ✓ The **APS** is assessed by MBF and feedback will be received as a result of the portfolio submission from which recommendations may be made before successful achievement of the Standard.
- ✓ Organisations will self assess for **PQASSO** at three levels of achievement – 1,2 & 3.

What are the key differences between the two Standards?

- ✓ The **APS** lasts for three years.
- ✓ As a self assessment tool, **PQASSO** currently has no associated timeframe.

- ✓ The **APS** is a national award.
- ✓ As a self assessment tool, **PQASSO** is not currently defined by any specific territory.

- ✓ Support is offered to organisations via free workshop sessions that are run nationally and directly from MBF.
- ✓ CES run two day training courses on implementing **PQASSO** on a regular basis. There is a cost associated with attending these courses. In addition, CES oversees a network of trained and licensed Mentors to support the implementation process.

- ✓ The **APS** requires organisations to complete an application based on MandBF guidance answering 14 questions about their practice.
- ✓ **PQASSO** requires organisations to assess their practice against 12 quality areas.

- ✓ The **APS** offers 'Working Towards' certification for mentoring and befriending providers for a period of 12 months prior to submission of an application.
- ✓ There is currently no certification for **PQASSO**.

- ✓ Once a project has been running for the period recommended, the **APS** application can be submitted at any time and a response will usually be received within 4 weeks.
- ✓ The completion of **PQASSO** will depend on the allocation of time that organisations are able to commit – due to their being no formal assessment process, the onus lies with the organisation. The size of the organisation is likely to be a determinant.

- ✓ Successful applicants will receive a certificate highlighting their achievement of **APS**.
- ✓ There is currently no certification for **PQASSO**.

- ✓ Reaccreditation for the consists of the completion of a questionnaire highlighting any key changes in practice together with supporting evidence, as appropriate.
- ✓ There is no formalised process for reaccreditation for **PQASSO**, however organisations may want to build in an opportunity for review as part of their future quality planning.

How would organisations benefit from having both standards?

- ✓ The **APS** has been developed with the specific objective of providing a national benchmark for organisations running mentoring and befriending projects.
- ✓ **PQASSO** has been developed specifically for voluntary sector organisations to assess all areas of their operations and practice.

- ✓ The **APS** requires organisations to take a broad view in terms of assessing all aspects of project management in relation to the delivery of their mentoring or befriending programme.
- ✓ **PQASSO** requires organisations to gather more detailed evidence in relation to broader areas of their practice..

- ✓ The **APS** allows organisations to gain external feedback and assessment on their practice in relation to the delivery of their mentoring and befriending programme.
- ✓ Where an organisation can afford it, **PQASSO** provides an opportunity for working directly with a mentor on site to look at in house systems and implementation of the quality model.

How do the two Standards compare?

For organisations considering implementing both standards or for those who have already achieved the **APS**, a mapping table has been compiled that highlights where the evidence for one would also meet the requirement for the other.

Further Information:

Information regarding **PQASSO** can be accessed via the Charities Evaluation Website: www.ces-vol.org.uk. Downloadable information is limited but the website provides an online order service for the **PQASSO** workbook and accompanying CD Rom and information regarding the training on implementing **PQASSO** and mentor support.